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ABSTRACT

The intersection of work and family life has always been a popular topic of discussion among family theorists. This study examined human service employees in direct service positions coping with work stress, family stress, and work-family conflict. The effects of work stress, family stress and work-family conflict on depression were examined. Depression was defined as the chronic experience of dysphoric mood accompanied by multiple chronic somatic complaints, and the maintenance of negative and anhedonic beliefs. Subjects met the following criteria: (1) married or cohabiting with an opposite-sex partner; (2) working full-time; and (3) having some direct contact with agency clientele while delivering human services. There were 86 women and 34 men, with 72 married with children and 48 cohabiting. The sample reported moderate levels of work stress, family stress, economic stress, and low levels of parenting stress. Work-family conflict was moderate, while depression was low. Family-restructuring and emotion-focused coping levels were moderate and work-restructuring was low. The assumption that human service workers would report high levels of stress might have been violated because the sample experienced little stress or subjects were reluctant to report stress. The only significant gender difference was that women reported higher levels of family restructuring than men. This may indicate that women continue to maintain a primary commitment to childcare and household duties. (LLL)

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HUMAN SERVICE EMPLOYEES
COPING WITH JOB STRESS, FAMILY STRESS
AND WORK-FAMILY CONFLICT

A research report

Presented to the Participating Agencies

by

DOMINIC J. CARBONE, PhD

AUGUST 1991

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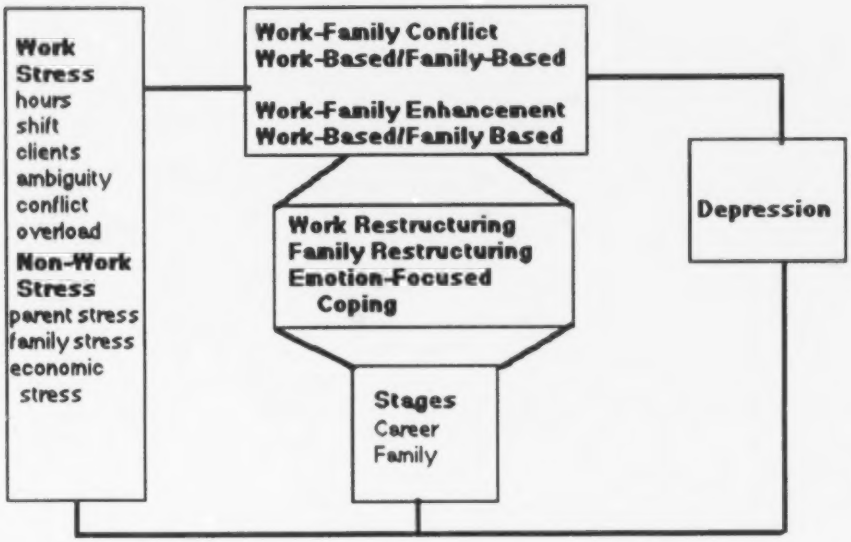
The Research Model



Introduction

The intersection of work and family life has always been a popular topic of discussion amongst family theorists (Blood and Wolfe, 1960; Kanter, 1977; Piotrkowski, 1979). In the past two decades the interest in this topic has been attributed to the increase in women leaving their traditional role as housewives and entering the workforce, as well as a desire to explain the effects of balancing the incompatible aspects of work and family roles on both the individual and the family (Kopelman, Greenhaus, and Connelly, 1983; Pleck, 1977; Pleck, Staines, and Lang, 1980). Of particular interest in the present study was human service work because of several features of the work described by Hasenfeld (1983). Human service work is unique in the sense that it involves the production of services designed to sustain or improve the lives of its consumers (counseling, health care, etc.). Unlike the goods produced in manufacturing occupations, the end product of human service work is not a tangible good or product. Success in human service work is measured in terms of the amount of improvement in the lives of the clientele it serves, unlike the manufacturing sector where success is measured in terms of profits. In addition to these general uniquenesses, human service work has a longstanding tradition of having a predominantly female workforce and has provided women with paid employment for performing duties that are somewhat analogous, rather than incompatible, with their traditional role as "caretaker" at home. Many of the job duties associated with human service work are also analogous with the duties that women are socialized to perform (Baruch, Biener, and Barnett, 1987). Although the acquisition of more and different roles has been hypothesized to build competence in women (Thoits,1986; Verbrugge,1986), it is unclear what the effect of acquiring a similar role in a different domain is on the individual and her ability to cope with work-family conflict. For men, human service work may represent the acquisition of duties that are different and incompatible with their traditional role in the family; their "instrumental role," as described by Blood and Wolfe (1960). The present study attempted to examine human service employees in direct service (non-administrative) positions coping with work stress, family stress and work-family conflict.

Work Stress

Stress is an experience that most workers expect to encounter on the job to some degree. Stress arises from work-role characteristics such as heavy work loads, underutilization of abilities, lack of participation in decision making, health and safety hazards, the threat of unemployment, tight deadlines, and the responsibility for the safety and well-being of others (McLean, 1979; Shostak, 1980; Sweetland, 1979). Many studies have demonstrated that the worker who fails to adequately adjust to or cope with stress may perform poorly on the job, as well as experience psychological and/or physical symptoms (Pleck, 1977; Pleck, Staines, and Lang, 1980). In addition to these outcomes resulting from job stress that is not adequately handled, it has been found that stress at work directly affects aspects of the worker's non-work performance such as their ability to perform household tasks, spousal support functions and leisure activities (Burke and Greenhaus,

1987).

Work Stressors

1. Work hours: shift schedule and years on the job

Research indicates that the number of hours worked is related to the quality of both work and family life (Voydanoff, 1984). More specifically, those working long hours (more than 37 hours per week) are likely to have higher levels of work stress and work-family conflict and strain (Burke, Weir and DuWors, 1980; Mortimer, 1980; Staines and Pleck, 1983; Voydanoff, 1984; Voydanoff and Kelly, 1984). Variations in work scheduling have also been found to affect family life, so that individuals who work non-daytime shifts and weekends experience higher levels of work stress and work-family conflict (Voydanoff, 1984). Research has reported less consistent results regarding the association between the number of years on the job and work stress, and it has been suggested that this association is unique to each occupational category (Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985).

2. Client Contact

The amount of time a human service worker is exposed to his or her clientele has been found to be positively correlated with the experience of work stress (Cherniss, 1980; Maslach; 1978). In an attempt to cope with this stress, the human service worker may find himself or herself withdrawing from clientele, disengaging from work and retreating to the non-work domain as a source of comfort (Freudenberger, 1975; Greenhaus and Parasurawan, 1986; Maslach, 1978).

Non-work Stress

Stress is by no means limited to the work domain. Conditions exist off the job that give rise to the experience of stress (Piotrkowski, 1979). The following factors are a few that have been found to relate to the experience of non-work stress: marital status, years at that status, the age of the youngest child and educational status (Piotrkowski, 1979; Voydanoff, 1988). These stressors were also of interest to the present study. Non-work stress is defined as the perceived discomfort resulting from the person's inability to adequately cope with stressors in the non-work environment (Pearlin and Schooler, 1978). The stressors in this case are chronic, long-term stressors, as opposed to acute life events. The present study made use of three categories of non-work stress proposed by Pearlin and Schooler (1978): family stress, economic stress, and parenting stress. This was an attempt, once again, to replicate the general finding from previous studies regarding non-work stress and work-family conflict; that being: more stress results in more conflict.

Non-work Variables

1. Marital Status and Years Coupled

All subjects in the present study were required to be either married or cohabitating, therefore comparisons could not be made between married and single persons. However, no differences were expected to be found between married and cohabitating couples in regard to other important variables and outcomes.

2. Age of Youngest Child

The age of the youngest child has been found to be negatively correlated with both family stress and work-family conflict levels for both spouses (Cleary and Mechanic, 1983). This correlation is strongest for women. Younger children require additional care so that mothers with infants and toddlers are the group most vulnerable to role overload and strain and they may derive the least benefit from assuming the additional role of "the worker" (McLanahan and Adams, 1986).

3. Educational Status

Higher levels of education has been found to reduce the likelihood of psychological distress and fatigue since persons with higher status and education have greater access to resources with which to cope with their life circumstance (Kessler, 1979).

Work-Family Conflict and Enhancement

Work-family conflict is defined as the perceived distress associated with attempts by the person to cope with the stresses from both the domains of work and family (Voydanoff, 1988). Just as stress results from an appraisal of conditions that exist in the environment (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984), work-family conflict reflects an appraisal of one's inability to manage the stressful conditions arising from each domain.

As mentioned previously, there are also positive effects of participating in roles in both domains (Thoits, 1986; Verbrugge, 1986). For the purposes of this study, work-family enhancement was defined as the perceived comfort associated with experiences in both the domains of work and family. Just as one may appraise conditions that exist in either domain as stressful, one may also appraise conditions in either domain as pleasurable. As a result of this pleasure, something positive is transmitted from one domain to another. The present study conceptualized and measured this phenomenon in terms of work-based enhancement of family life (WBENH) and family-based enhancement of work life (FBENH). Work-based enhancement of family life is defined as enhancement appraised as primarily originating from conditions at work. Family-based enhancement of work life is defined as enhancement appraised as primarily originating from conditions in the family domain.

Coping With Work-Family Conflict

Role Restructuring

Behaviors that eliminate or modify the conditions that give rise to work-family conflict are referred to as problem-focused coping (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984). One category of problem-focused coping that has been recently identified in the work-family research is referred to as work restructuring (Jackson, Zedeck and Summers, 1985; Yogev and Brett, 1985). Work restructuring refers to both permanent and temporary arrangements made by the worker, in regard to his or her job role, in order to accommodate family life (Yogev and Brett, 1985). Work restructuring has been found to reduce both family stress and work-family conflict amongst professional and para-professional employees (Brett and Yogev, 1989; Yogev and Brett, 1985). An

example of work restructuring would be structuring one's hours of arrival and departure to accommodate the family's schedule.

The present study was also interested in attempts by the worker to adjust features of his or her family domain to accommodate the work domain. With the increase in women entering the job market and this study's interest in human service occupations that predominantly employ women, "family restructuring" was proposed as an additional variable in the model. An example of family restructuring would be limiting the time spent on weekends with the family in order to get ahead or catch up on work.

Emotion-focused Coping

In addition to problem-focused coping, such as role restructuring, persons also perform behaviors that control the meaning of the conflict experience in a way that neutralizes its problematic character and manages the emotional consequences associated with the conflict (Pearlin and Schooler, 1978). When coping behaviors are performed for the purpose of perceptually changing the meaning and manage the emotions resulting from a stressful experience such as work-family conflict, they are referred to as emotion-focused coping (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984). This type of coping may be used instead of problem-focused coping, or when more direct attempts at changing the situation have failed or are impossible to employ (Pearlin and Schooler, 1978; Pearlin, 1980). Emotion-focused coping has been shown to be an effective way of managing work-stress and the conflicts that result from it (Latack, 1986). It has been suggested that the use of emotion-focused coping to manage work-family conflict should be examined (Brett and Yogev, 1989). The few studies of coping with work-family conflict have focused primarily on the use of more direct attempts at changing the situation, or what Lazarus and Folkman (1984) refer to as problem-focused coping (Burke and Greenglass, 1987). By measuring the use of emotion-focused forms of coping, the present study attempted to increase our understanding of this type of coping in regard to managing work-family conflict.

Human Service Work and the Role of Gender

As mentioned previously, the recent interest in work-family conflict has been attributed to a desire to understand the personal and familial effects of the increase in women leaving their traditional roles as housewives and entering into the workforce (Kopelman, Greenhaus and Connelly, 1983; Pleck, 1977; Pleck, Staines and Lang, 1980). More specifically, this research has been inspired by the concern for workers participating in two or more roles that are mutually incompatible (Blood and Wolfe, 1960; Kanter, 1977; Piotrkowski, 1979). Regarding these two points, the subjects in the present study were unique in the sense that they were working in a profession, human services, that has a longstanding tradition as a female-dominated profession (Hasenfeld, 1983). Furthermore, the subjects in this study were direct care providers, meaning that much of their time on the job was spent in direct contact with their clientele. For female employees, many of the role demands of a direct care provider are analogous to the traditional role demands of "caretaker" at home. This may make balancing the demands of work and family a unique experience for female human service workers.

Depression

There is evidence that both work stressors and non-work stressors exert an effect on one's level of depression. Family stressors, such as the number of children and single parenthood increase the likelihood of psychological depression and fatigue (Kessler, 1979; Thoits and Hannan, 1979). Mothers with infants and toddlers are the group most vulnerable to role overload, strain and depression (Cleary and Mechanic, 1983). The combined effects of work and non-work stressors have been studied also. Women without children who are married and employed outside the home or are non-working mothers have lower levels of depression than women who work and have children (Aneshensel, Frerichs and Clark, 1982; Gore and Mangione, 1983; Kandel, Davies and Raveis, 1985). Psychiatric symptoms are higher with the number of children among employed women but not among homemakers (Gove and Geerken, 1977).

The present study was concerned with the effects of work stress, family stress and work-family conflict on depression. Depression was defined as the chronic experience of dysphoric mood (i.e., feeling blue, feeling lonely) accompanied by multiple chronic somatic complaints (i.e., feeling low in energy) and the maintenance of negative and anhedonic beliefs (i.e., feelings of worthlessness, loss of sexual interest) about the self (Lipman, 1982).

Subjects

Subjects met the following three criteria: (1) married or cohabitating with an opposite-sex partner; (2) working at least full time (35 hours) and (3) having some direct contact with agency clientele while delivering human services (i.e., counseling, nursing care, etc.). One-hundred and twenty subjects participated in this study. The average age of the participants was 37.8. There were eighty-six women and thirty-four men. Seventy-two were married with children, and forty-eight were cohabitating.

Results

Work Stressors

1. Weekly Hours

The number of hours one works per week has been found to be positively correlated with work stress and work-family conflict (Burke, Weir and DuWors, 1980; Mortimer, 1980; Staines and Pleck, 1983; Voydanoff, 1984; Voydanoff and Kelly, 1984). It is believed that participation in the work domain is positively correlated with the experience of stress in that domain. In addition, participation in the work domain is believed to limit participation in the family domain, thus weekly hours was posited to be positively correlated with work-family conflict. In the present study, weekly hours was not correlated with work stress (r=.01; p=n.s.), approached being positively correlated with work-family conflict (r= .20; p=n.s.) and was significantly and positively correlated with work-based work-family conflict (r= .28; p<.01). In addition, weekly hours was not correlated with family-based work-family conflict (r= .05; p=n.s.).

Several factors might account for this mixed pattern of correlations. The lack of a relationship between weekly hours on the job and work stress might be due to the fact that the majority of the sample worked an average full time shift with few persons working many hours past 37 hours. The absence of a correlation between weekly hours and work stress, when considered in conjunction with the magnitude of the correlation between weekly hours and work-based conflict, suggests that working, irrespective of the number of hours, was associated with distress, in the form of conflict, rather than work stress. Distress, in the form of conflict, differs from distress, in the form of work stress, in that conflict results from the perception of the inability to balance the simultaneous demands from two different domains. Work stress results from the perceived discomfort resulting from the worker's inability to adequately cope with stressors in the work environment (Pearlin and Schooler, 1978). In summary, weekly hours was not a work stressor associated with work stress, but rather it was associated with conflict, and more specifically work-family conflict originating in the work domain.

2. Number of years on the job.

Regarding the relationship between the number of years on the job and work stress, most research has found mixed results and this is attributed to the uniqueness of each occupational category (Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985). For example, in white collar professions, tenure and security typically accompany an increase in years on the job. In certain careers that lack this type of a progressive career track, an increase in years on the job, while associated with higher pay, may also be associated with monotony, burnout and dissatisfaction (Hall, 1986). In the present study years on the job was positively correlated with work stress (r= .21; $p<.05$), work-family conflict (r= .31; $p<.01$), negatively correlated with work-based enhancement (r= -.32; $p<.01$), and the relationship with work-based work-family conflict approached significance (r= .15; p= n.s.). These results suggested that those subjects in this sample who were on the job longer reported more work stress and work-family conflict. The occupations surveyed in this study are characterized as direct care positions which require a high degree of client contact, emotional commitment, physical commitment, coupled with overload, low power, low prestige, low pay and few opportunities for advancement (Hall, 1986). Possibly monotony and burnout, coupled with work-family conflict, accompanied the increase in years on the job in this sample.

3. Client Contact

It has been found that the amount of time a human service worker spends with his or her clientele is positively correlated with work stress (Cherniss, 1980; Maslach, 1978). In the present sample the correlation between client contact and work stress was nearly zero. The measure used in the present study was different from those used in previous studies in that it measured one's perception of time spent with clients. While perceived time spent with clients was not associated with work stress, it was positively and significantly correlated with work-family conflict.

4. Shift Schedule

Research has demonstrated that it is not merely the participation in the work role that might be stressful but additionally the scheduling of the participation in that role (Voydanoff, 1984). It has been found that individuals who work flexible and daytime shifts, as opposed to night shifts, reported less work-family conflict and work stress (Voydanoff, 1984). In the present study, those persons working the night shift (Mean=2.4; SD=.55) and afternoon shift (Mean= 2.0; SD=.56) reported significantly higher levels of work-family conflict than those working flexible (Mean=1.2;SD=.95) and day shifts (Mean=1.2; SD=1.0; F_{100}=3.64, p<.02). This finding was consistent with previous studies.

Non-Work Stressors

1. Marital Status and Years Coupled

All subjects who participated in the present study were required to be either married or cohabitating in order to participate in the study. T-tests were performed to test the hypothesis that there were no significant differences between married and cohabitating persons on all of the major variables in question. No significant differences between married and cohabitating persons were found on any of the variables in question.

2. Age of Youngest Child

It is believed that younger children contribute to more family stress due to their high demand for attention and care so that the age of the youngest child is bound to be negatively correlated with both family stress and work-family conflict levels for both spouses (Cleary and Mechanic, 1983). These findings were not replicated in the present study. The age of the youngest child was negatively correlated with economic stress (r=-.30; p<.05) but not family stress, and positively correlated with family-based work-family conflict (r=.25; p<.05). So in this sample, an increase in the age of the youngest child was associated with a decrease in economic stress and an increase in family-based work-family conflict.

3. Educational Status

Education has been found to reduce the likelihood of psychological distress and fatigue since persons with higher education have greater access to resources with which to cope with their life circumstances (Kessler, 1979). In the present study there were no significant differences between educational groups on work stress, work-based work-family conflict, family-based work-family conflict and enhancement. Those persons possessing a high school diploma (Mean=9.2; SD=5.5) reported significantly lower levels of work-based enhancement than those with Bachelors degrees (Mean=10.6; SD=4.7) and those with Master's degrees (Mean=13.3; SD=5.4; F_{111}= 4.13, p< .02). For persons in this sample with less education, less enhancement was derived from the workplace.

Work stress, non-work stress, coping and depression.

Zero-order correlations were performed to test the relationships between work stress, non-work stress, coping and depression. As mentioned previously, stress experienced in one domain may be associated with stress in another (Greenhaus and Parasuraman, 1986). Stressors in one domain may directly result in stress

experienced in another domain or the attempts to cope with stress in one domain may tax performance in another domain, subsequently resulting in the experience of stress in the other domain.

In the present study work stress was positively correlated with family stress (r=.37; p<.01) and economic stress (r=.27; p<.01), as expected, based on previous theoretical formulations and research findings (Greenhaus and Parasuraman, 1986; Piotrkowski, 1979). Also as expected, based on previous research, (Pearlin and Schooler, 1978), family stress was significantly correlated with economic stress (r=.53; p<.01), and with parenting stress (r=.59; p<.01). Economic stress was significantly correlated with parenting stress (r=.45; p<.01). Work stress was positively correlated with family restructuring (r=.27; p<.01), but not associated with either work-restructuring or emotion-focused coping. It was expected that increases in work stress would be accompanied by attempts to restructure the family to cope with this stress. However, it was not expected that increases in family stress would be positively correlated with family restructuring (r=.26; p<.05), and not correlated with work-restructuring (r=.05; p=n.s.).

Work restructuring was very low in this sample, while the practice of family restructuring was used moderately on average. This may be due to the structure of human service occupations, which often do not allow for work restructuring. Restructuring activities such as leaving work early, changing one's schedule and taking work home, are activities that typically are not permitted by most agencies. It appears in this sample that family is the domain in which restructuring is performed, but not to any great degree. Increases in stress in both domains, were positively correlated with an increase in the use of family restructuring.

Regarding the relationship between stress and depression, work stress (r=.54; p<.01), family stress (r=.52; p<.01), economic stress (r=.34; p<.01) and parenting stress (r=.23; p<.01) were all positively correlated with depression, as expected (Kessler, 1979; Pearlin and Schooler, 1978). In terms of the relationship between coping and depression, family restructuring was the only type of coping positively correlated with depression (r=.34; p<.01). Speculating on causality, it is possible that when this type of coping is practiced it results in depression. The practice of putting family second to work may be depressing to a predominantly female sample, since the female identity is assumed to be derived from family work. Equally likely, is the possibility that depressive symptoms, such as despondency and withdrawal from social relationships, might cause the worker to withdraw from the family and retreat into the domain of work. Work restructuring, which was hardly practiced in this sample, was not correlated with depression (r=.04; p=n.s.) and the practice of emotion-focused coping approached being significantly correlated with depression in the negative direction (r=-.13; p=n.s.).

Work-family conflict and enhancement, coping and depression.

Zero-order correlations were performed to test the relationships between work-family conflict and enhancement, coping and depression. Work-family conflict was positively correlated with family restructuring (r=.37; p<.01), but not significantly correlated with work restructuring (r=.16; p=n.s.) or emotion-focused coping (r=-.08; p=n.s.). This parallels the relationship between stresses, both work and non-work, with

coping. When examining the domain of origin from which the conflict arose, work-based work-family conflict was positively correlated with family restructuring (r=.347; p<.01) as expected, but not with work restructuring (r=.06; p=n.s.). Family-based work-family conflict was not significantly correlated with any type of coping. It was expected that family-based work-family conflict would be positively correlated with work restructuring. All three categories of conflict were positively associated with depression. The correlation between work-based work-family conflict with depression was significantly stronger than the correlation between family-based work-family conflict and depression.

In summary, family restructuring was positively correlated with work-family conflict, and depression was more highly correlated with work-based work-family conflict rather than family based work-family conflict. Enhancement from both domains was positively associated with emotion-focused coping and negatively associated with depression. It is possible that this type of coping, as opposed to problem-focused coping (restructuring) results in feelings of enhancement, because it is cognitive and internal, rather than active. It does involve making a choice between domains. Both work and family restructuring, require external efforts to limit the participation in one domain role for the benefit of participation in the other domain role.

iii) Gender Differences

T-test group comparisons were performed on each of the following variable to examine sex differences: client contact, work stress, family stress, economic stress, parenting stress, work-family conflict, work-based work-family conflict, family-based work-family conflict, work-based enhancement, family-based enhancement, work restructuring, family restructuring, emotion-focused coping and depression. None of the sex differences were significant with the exception of family restructuring. Women reported higher levels of family restructuring than men and this difference was significant ($Mean_{men}$=9.90; $Mean_{women}$=11.85; t_{102}=1.95; p<.05).

Discussion

i) The Sample

In general this sample reported moderate levels of work stress, family stress, economic stress and low levels of parenting stress. Work-family conflict was moderate, while depression was low. Family-restructuring and emotion-focused coping levels were moderate and work-restructuring was low. The implications of these features of the sample will be discussed later.

In terms of work restructuring, the sample mean was very low. It is possible that this type of occupation does allow for this type of coping. Brett and Yogev (1989) found that both men and women restructure work to accommodate family and that occupations that allow for time scheduling were associated with more restructuring. In this study, restructuring activities, such as leaving work early, changing one's schedule and taking work home may not be permissible activities in direct care human service work. Restructuring the

family may be the only type of coping available to these workers and while the result of coping is, by definition, the reduction of distress, because family restructuring is the only type available, practicing it may be more distressing. It may also result in distress because of socialization issues discussed in the previous chapter. The family might also have been more amenable to restructuring than the workplace.

Family restructuring was present in moderate amounts in this sample. Subjects in the present study, as a group reported low-to-moderate levels of work stress and family stress, as well as low-to-moderate levels of work-family conflict and depression, relative to the scales used in the present study. These levels of reported work and family stress were consistent with findings from other studies of work and family stress, most notably Pearlin and Schooler (1978). Two competing explanations may be applied to explain these findings: (1) subjects in the present study might have been experiencing moderate levels of stress and their reports might have been accurate, or (2) subjects might have been experiencing higher amounts of stress and their reports might not have accurately reflected their level of stress.

Suppose we accept the first explanation. What accounts for this low-to-moderate level of reported stress? Some possible explanations are: (1) the majority of the sample consisted of effective copers, (2) the majority of the sample consisted of persons who were resilient to the stress present on their job, or (3) the workplace was not stressful by lacking significant stressors. If one supposed the sample consisted of effective copers, then one might expect to find reports of frequent coping activity. The coping behaviors measured in this sample (work restructuring, family restructuring and emotion-focused coping) were reported in low-to-moderate levels, and in the case of family restructuring, were sometimes strongly associated with increased levels of depression. It is possible, however that other forms of coping not measured in this study were employed.

If the subjects were resilient to stress then one might expect subjects to report the presence of certain stress buffers such as coworker support, supervisor support, spousal support and personal control over the pace of one's job; all have been found to decrease the experience of stress in either domain (Maslach 1978; Voydanoff, 1987). While these stress buffers were not central to the questions addressed in the present study, they were measured in the present study for subsequent consideration. All of these were reported to exist in moderate amounts in this sample. Also, it is possible that the practices of role staging and role sequencing, might have served to buffer the sample from the effects of stress in either domain in this sample. Subjects reported that the workplace lacked significant stressors, most notably work shifts, that have been found to result in stress in previous studies. One explanation for the moderate levels of work stress and family stress and low work-family conflict in the present sample may be explained by the fact that the majority of the sample was employed on either a daytime or a flexible schedule, both of which have been found to decrease work stress, family stress and work-family conflict (Voydanoff, 1987). Unlike work restructuring and family restructuring, that are temporary arrangements made to cope with work-family conflict and stress, flex-time scheduling is a long-term form of restructuring decided by both the employee and employer to decrease

work-family conflict.

In summary, if the first explanation is correct then the reports of low-to-moderate levels of stress might be due to the sample being comprised of good copers, resilient workers who practiced role sequencing and role staging, or a low stress work environment with flexible work schedules.

In addition to reporting moderate levels of work stress and family stress, the sample reported low levels of depression, relative to the scale. It is possible that a low depression level may be accounted for by the role expansion hypothesis which predicts that the acquisition of additional roles, like that of the worker, will decrease distress and may even increase gratification (Sieber, 1974; Marks, 1977; Thoits, 1986). It has been suggested by Wethington (1987) that role expansion benefits men, but women's family roles prevent them from gaining the same psychological benefits from employment that men do. What happens when the additional role acquired is similar to the family role and the person receives a salary for performing it? For women, human service work represents the acquisition of a similar role in a different context with pay, rather than a different role in a different context. Does this allow her to derive gratification from the role of worker?

According to the limited gratification hypothesis, the restriction of the majority of adult women to homemaking is thought to limit the gratification, social support and economic resources that women can enjoy while their husbands reap the psychological benefits of two roles (Gove and Geerken, 1977). It is possible that human service work is an extension of this limited gratification process to a role in another domain because there is a high degree of role similarity between the homemaker role and direct care worker role. However, the economic factor (i.e., that she is receiving money for performing "household" or "female" duties outside of the home) might make it less distressing.

In summary, if the first explanation is correct, then it is possible that the employees gained psychological benefits from employment because the acquisition of this role was similar to their socialized role and they received money for performing it outside of the home. The lack of gender differences in the present sample may suggest that the males in the sample were not socialized in the traditional way as an "instrumental" provider or "breadwinner", as described by Blood and Wolfe (1960).

The second explanation which states that subjects in the study might have been under stress and the reports might not have been an accurate reflection of their inner state, might be explained by the following: (1) a response bias against reporting stress, (2) a selection bias whereby workers were selected or selected themselves into the human services, who possess the ability to manage their emotions to such an extent that they are less likely to report stress, (3) a fixed and rigid stress appraisal process that appraises stress that is strongly linked with one's identity or role performance as negligible and easily coped with by the worker, and (4) burnt-out employees that no longer perceive stress because there commitment to their role is so low that they are immune to the effects of stress, secondary to role performance.

In terms of the response bias explanation, subjects might have been biased against endorsing items that indicated stress or depression to give the illusion that they are coping. The existence of highly face-valid

items in both the stress and depression scales, combined with the perception that human service workers are supposed to be competent and cope effectively, might make this a plausible explanation. This attitude about human service workers was expressed by the majority of participants in the discussion group, mentioned previously. If one's identity is tied up in the performance of this role, then admitting to stress may be synonymous with admitting to failure, and in the case of women, failure as a female. Admitting to experiencing stress might not be a psychologically palatable option, so the employees may respond in biased ways indicating that they are coping or experiencing minimal stress. As one woman stated, "My job can't be stressful. I won't let it. It's all I've got to make money, to live on. I'm good at it too--I think?"

The response bias may also be reflected in a job selection bias. It has been suggested that persons who work in service occupations have learned to manage their emotions to such an extent that they are less likely to report stress or depression (Hochschild, 1983). People may perceive themselves as a good copers so they are less likely to report stress because coping effectively is consistent with their view of themselves as service employees. According to Thoits (1986), the self is defined as a set of social identities assigned by others and accepted by the person. The self is expressed through social roles. Occupational roles, for example, are a set of prescriptions regarding how one is to behave on the job (Kahn, et al., 1964). Following this description and relating it to the present study, for human service workers, the role expectations demand empathy, selflessness and both physical and psychological health (Hasenfeld, 1983). These characteristics are demanded by the human service profession, the agency, the clientele and society. Human service workers may be reluctant to report stress on the job, because it may be considered inappropriate, or considered incongruous with their perceived role. The same goes for family stress and conflict. Additionally, for women, it may be considered inappropriate or synonymous with admitting defeat, to report work-family conflict. Reporting stress or conflict may be admitting a failure to cope or "have it all". Admitting to failure in the "caretaking" role is similar to admitting to failure as a woman, since caretaking is believed to be a large part of a woman's identity (Blood and Wolfe, 1960).

This selection bias may also be reflected in a fixed appraisal process. Hochschild (1983) has posited that the emotions of the service worker are managed. It is possible that the emotions can be managed to such an extent that, in Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) terminology, stressors are uniformly appraised as not being stressful. It might also be the case that service employees are selected by their employers based on their ability to manage their emotions and those who cannot manage their emotions select themselves out via turnover, as Hochschild (1983) has suggested. Additionally, if workers are perceived by their supervisors and peers as not possessing the appropriate attributes, it is possible that they may experience pressure to leave the job or detach from it in some way (Maslach, 1978). Workers themselves also select themselves into service occupations that require them to manage their emotions.

One of Kohn and Schooler's (1983) premises, put forth from their studies of work and personality, is that in the short-term one's personality affects one's career choice and subsequent work behavior. This premise is also found in the literature on career choice (Super and Bohn,1970). For example, an empathetic person, or one who perceives himself/herself to be empathetic may select himself/herself into human service work. If his/her behavior on the job is consistent with his/her personality, also known as "a good person-environment fit", then he/she derives satisfaction from his/her role performance, receives coworker support and supervisor support. As a result of this, he/she remains on the job, where he/she derives a sense of competence and satisfaction. Kohn and Schooler (1983) also posit that in the long term, work conditions affect personality. For example, a person participating in a human service occupation may develop empathetic characteristics, regardless of whether they previously were empathetic. An equally likely scenario is that they might select themselves out of such a job with role demands that conflict with their personality, especially if their identity is defined to a large degree by their participation in the job role. Part of one's role in service work might be to adopt a fixed pattern of appraising stress such that they appraise the stressors in their environment in a minimalizing fashion (Hochschild, 1983).

Another explanation might be that persons in this sample were burnt-out and depersonalized from the stressful aspects of their career. Burnout is defined as a syndrome experienced by workers in the helping professions, comprised primarily of four key aspects: emotional exhaustion, a depersonalized view of the clientele, a decrease in the amount of felt personal achievement and a decrease in the amount of emotional involvement with one's clients (Maslach, 1978; Maslach and Jackson, 1981; Maslach, 1982; Maslach and Jackson, 1986). The causes of burnout, according to Maslach's definition, are client-based or due to contact with clients with severe problems (Maslach and Jackson, 1981). In the final or "burnt-out" phase the person is detached from both clientele and job, so it is possible that in this mode one may appraise stressors as not being stressful. The "burnt-out" worker reports a lack of empathy for the clientele, a cynicism about his/her job, as well as other attitudes that reflect detachment from work role. This might account for low reports of stress and depression in the present sample.

In summary, the assumption that human service workers would report high levels of stress might have been violated because the sample experienced little stress or subjects were reluctant to report stress. If the sample was low in stress it might have been due to the majority of the sample being active copers, resilient to stress or they may have benefited from the acquisition of the additional role of worker. If they were reluctant to report stress, this might have been due to personality characteristics of the sample, selection bias, role expectations or socialization that all resulted in managed emotions and a fixed stress appraisal process that minimalized the stressors encountered in either domain.

III) Gender Differences

The results indicated only one significant gender difference between men and women on any of the major categories of variables. Women were expected to exhibit more work stress, family stress and depression

than men, based on previous studies. Women were also expected to perform more work-restructuring than men, as well as exhibit higher levels of work-family conflict. The only significant gender difference was that women reported higher levels of family restructuring than men. This may indicate that women continue to maintain a primary commitment to childcare and household duties.

The lack of significant gender differences in this sample may be due to: (1) factors that made the work and home domains as stressful for men as they are for women; and (2) factors that made the work domain less stressful for women than their female counterparts who work in occupations where males comprise the majority of the workforce. It is believed that women score higher on work stress, family stress and depression measures because of their position in the power hierarchy of the workplace and in the society in general (Kanter, 1977). This disproportionate amount of stress and depression may not be due to gender, per se, but rather due to the low power and low prestige of women's roles in our society and in the workplace. It has been suggested by Kanter (1977; 1978) that when men occupy a similar position, one of low power and prestige, they are affected in much the same way and exhibit similar levels of depression as women.

Alternately, women in human service, direct care positions are performing a role that is somewhat analogous to their socialized role as caretaker, and are receiving a salary for this. So the acquisition of this additional, similar role may not have a noticeably negative effect. The sub-culture of human service workers is female-dominated, so some source of support may be present that is not present in work situations that are not female-dominated. For men, this type of work is incompatible with their socialized role as the instrumental family member. The low salaries may result in them not being the primary breadwinner in the family domain, but rather an equal partner in contributing to the family economically. These men may have been socialized in a way that was less traditional, as witnessed by their choice of occupation, or they may have become less traditionally male by performing a "classically female" job role (Kohn and Schooler, 1983). In either case, this may account for the lack of gender differences found in this study.

V) Conclusions and directions for future research.

More studies concerning the lives of human service workers are needed for several reasons. First, studying direct care providers can yield important information regarding the stress and coping process in high stress occupations. This information can be generalized to care providers in unpaid and volunteer situations, as well as other high stress occupations that serve the public by producing non-human services. Second, stress management interventions can be formulated based on these studies that address the needs of this category of employees. These interventions can greatly improve the quality of services delivered. Lastly, studying this population can yield information regarding the effects on men of crossing over into occupations and family situations that violate traditional gender roles.

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